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equal to that which his observations imply, and that in this particular he has added to my determinations the confirmation of specific evidence.

T. C. CHAMBERLIN.

TWO EXTRAORDINARY BRITISH PATENTS.

PATENT No. 14,204, granted 27th October, 1884, by Her Majesty's Commissioner of Patents to Harry Fell, Mercantile Clerk, of South Norwood Park, is described as a 'New Method for getting Gold from Wheat.' The complete specification is as follows:

"That in the steeping of the mixture of half, measure, 'the whole wheat straw cut into fine square snips the width of the straw and half' the grains in a jar of ordinary cold water "I let the steep remain still for ten hours at a temperature of fifty-nine degrees Fahrenheit varying with temperature, and then straining off the liquor into a shallow pan of some such cool substance as china or earthenware, I leave this liquor to stand in this pan for yet twenty-four hours at sixty degrees also varying with temperature; these durations of times of ten hours and twenty-four hours speaking for a very inferior brown straw much knocked about and the grains those, of a very good quality, of red wheat; and then catch up the skim on a cylinder of some such cool substance as china or earthenware," and then let this skim dry, so getting some results of films of Gold."

The simplicity of this process for getting gold from wheat is as extraordinary as the language used in describing it; the above being a literal transcript, including the peculiar use of punctuation marks. The specification occupies two pages in quarto form and can be had at the Patent Office, Sale Branch, 38 Cursitor street, Chancery Lane, for two pence.

The second of these curious patents is numbered 1919 and bears the date 2d February, 1889. It is described as an 'improved means of detecting the presence of gold and silver underground,' and was granted to Samuel Adams Goodman, Jr., of Tyler, in the county of Smith and State of Texas, U. S. A. This specification also occupies two pages and is accompanied by a plate representing an ordinary glass bottle containing a solid body and a liquid, corked and sealed with wax; to the cork is fastened a string terminating in a loop.

Mr. Goodman, farmer, of Texas, makes the following statement:

"The object of this invention is to enable precious

metals to be discovered by a process of divination; and it consists in a composition which has a strong attraction and affinity for gold and silver, the attraction resembling somewhat that of magnetism. In carrying my invention into practice, I place the composition in a vial or flask, seal it tightly and suspend it by means of a string. The composition referred to is made up of gold, silver, quicksilver and copper, the ingredients being placed in a small vial or flask, together with a quantity of dilute nitric, or tartaric acid or pure alcohol. * * *

"In using my gold and silver finder the instrument is held, preferably by the thumb and forefinger of the right hand and steadied with the left hand; it should be held steady but not cramped. Then, if there are any precious metals in the immediate neighborhood, the flask will be attracted by such metals and will move towards them at first and will then vibrate, thus indicating the presence of the metal sought for.

"To protect and conceal the contents of the flask, I cover it with paper, cloth or tin."

This is substantially the whole claim, in securing which Mr. Goodman was assisted by A. M. and Wm. Clark, patent agents of 53 Chancery Lane.

It is satisfactory to note that Texan farmers write English much more clearly than London mercantile clerks.

Western farmers are hereby warned against attempting to get gold out of their wheat by the Fell process and against seeking for precious metals by the Goodman method. But seriously why are patents granted to persons making such absurd claims?

H. CARRINGTON BOLTON.

COMPLIMENT OR PLAGIARISM.

THE following letter is sent for publication, at Mr. Lefevre's request, by Professor Beman.

MESSRS. BEMAN AND SMITH,

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.

GENTLEMEN: I have just seen your reply to Dr. Halsted on page 275 of the current number of SCIENCE.

Much as I regret the unhappy chance that led to the furthest association of my name with that deplorable controversy—being a rational and just man—I do not reproach you, even for omitting to state the intrinsically trivial nature of the parallelism of that sentence in my book with a sentence in Sandeman's preface to his *Pellicotetics*. It was entirely proper to make

your point; but, considering the context, I am sorry you were not careful to prevent indefinite surmises by hasty readers. It may be remarked, also, that our librarian would gladly have furnished you still better proof that the book in question was in Texas.

It is my desire merely to explain that I wrote out the book hurriedly and partly from lecture notes made long before, and that the little rhetorical flourish (so acutely identified by you) somehow got incorporated without any consciousness, on my part, of its origin. If you will glance at the foot note on page 78 you will see that I was compelled once to quote: 'From note made long ago; exact reference lost.'

It only remains for me to correct the oversight so foreign to my principles and practice, and to have the *Errata* page changed at once so as to contain the following statement:

On page 92 read *single* quotation marks about the latter part of the last sentence of section 130 (after *accept*), and subjoin the foot note: An arraignment of algebraists on account of their abuses of infinite series, by A. Sandeman (*Pelicotetics*, 1868, Preface, p. 9.), which, though no longer deserved in that regard, is appropriate to widely prevailing ideas of the infinitesimal calculus."

It may be proper to add in conclusion that when I made the notes for my class lectures I had not the remotest intention of ever working up the matter for publication, and that this circumstance (though it would by no means excuse general carelessness) may explain how I accidentally omitted in this instance the citation for a rhetorical phrase that struck my fancy.

Yours respectfully,

ARTHUR LEFEVRE.

AUSTIN, TEXAS, February 17, 1897.

REDUCED RATES OF POSTAGE ON SPECIMENS OF NATURAL HISTORY IN THE INTERNA- TIONAL MAILS—AN APPEAL.

UNDER the present regulations of the Universal Postal Union specimens of Natural History are admitted to the mails of the Union only at letter rates—five cents for each half-ounce or fraction thereof.

At the International Congress of Zoology, held at Leyden, Holland, in September, 1895, Dr. Chas. Wardell Stiles, official delegate of

the United States government, offered resolutions, which were subsequently adopted, that the Swiss government be requested, through its delegate to the Congress of Zoology, to propose to the next International Postal Congress an amendment to the regulations thereof whereby specimens of natural history shall be carried in the mails of the Universal Postal Union at the rates for samples of merchandise; that an appeal should be addressed to all the delegates and members of the Congress of Zoology to bring this amendment to the notice of their respective governments, so that those governments should instruct their delegates to the Postal Congress to act favorably upon the same; that copies of these resolutions be sent by the Secretary of the Congress of Zoology to all governments forming part of the Universal Postal Union and which were not represented at the Congress of Zoology.

In accordance with these resolutions Dr. Stiles suggested to the Committee of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, having the subject of postage on natural history specimens in charge, that, although it is probable that the United States government will vote in favor of the proposed amendment, the cause will be helped by the Academy adopting resolutions in favor of this proposed amendment and requesting the Postmaster-General at Washington to instruct our American delegates to vote for the same.

This the Academy has done, but other American scientific bodies should join in the work, adopt similar resolutions and send them to our Postmaster-General that he may know that the students of natural history in the United States eagerly desire such a reduction in postage rates. The next International Postal Congress meets at Washington on the 5th of May next. The purpose of this article is to urge all those who read it to use such means and influence as may be at their command to help in the accomplishment of this end.

For the guidance of those who will aid in the manner suggested, a translation of the original French text of the amendment referred to is as follows:

"Amendment to Article XIX. (samples) 4, of the Regulations of Details and Order.